



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# In Memoriam

## MORRIS JASTROW, JR.

---

MORRIS JASTROW JR. AS A BIBLICAL CRITIC

JULIAN MORGENSTERN

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

IN HIS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1916, Professor Jastrow formulated his conception of the fundamental task of Biblical Criticism and of the methods by which this task must be performed. He entitled his address 'Constructive Elements in the Critical Study of the Old Testament'<sup>1</sup>. This title suggests the main thesis of all his Biblical research. He held that Biblical Criticism must be constructive in the truest sense of the term. In this address he said,<sup>2</sup> 'Because of the bearings of both Old and New Testament criticism on some of the fundamental problems of religious thought, . . . the critic should feel the obligation to correlate the bearings of his results on traditional points of view, which in turn are so closely bound up with current doctrines and beliefs.' And again in the same address,<sup>3</sup> 'Our endeavor in the critical study of the Old Testament needs to be directed . . . to a larger extent than heretofore towards determining the conditions underlying a document—if a legal document to the social status and the institutional ideas revealed by it, if a pure narrative to the relationship between the lives of the individuals and the events narrated, if folk-lore to the point of view—tribal or individual—from which the tradition sets out, and if in the domain of religious thought or emotion to the individual thoughts and emotions that called forth the production. The result will be in every case a stronger emphasis on the constructive elements to be extracted from a document or a purely literary production, supplemental to the critical analysis which must as a matter of course precede.'

---

<sup>1</sup> *JBL* 36 (1917). 1-30.

<sup>2</sup> P. 3.

<sup>3</sup> P. 23.



MORRIS JASTROW, JR.

Manifestly Jastrow was not content to follow mechanically the conventional path of Biblical Criticism. He seemed to feel that in present-day research there was too much sheep-like following in the beaten track which the pioneers of the modern school had marked out, a too unquestioning acceptance of earlier hypotheses and conclusions, a too pronounced tendency to regard the infinite mass of textual emendations and verse assignments as the be-all and end-all of scientific investigation, a too blind intolerance of new methods of investigation and of unorthodox hypotheses and conclusions. In the preface of his *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*<sup>4</sup> he said, 'One can readily understand how even learned and conscientious scholars through a determination to cling to certain views can acquire an attitude of mind which prevents them from weighing evidence judiciously and fairly. This observation applies particularly to those who deceive themselves by imagining that they are pursuing studies in an open-minded spirit, whereas in reality they are merely seeking a confirmation of views which they hold quite independently of their studies, and generally held antecedent to any investigation. But the observation may be extended also to scholars of a more scientific type who, in a spirit of reaction against views which they have come to regard as untenable, fail to penetrate into the depths of their subject because too much absorbed in the externalities—in textual criticism, or in investigations of special points without reference to the necessary relationship of even the infinitesimal parts of a subject to the subject as a whole.'

It is clear that Jastrow regarded the Bible as far more than a mere book, to be subjected to mere literary analysis and textual emendation; it was the remains of an ancient national literature, varied and noble; it was a precious document of the life, ideals and aspirations of a peculiar people and the record, or at least the earliest and most important part of the record, of their contribution to civilization. And the final aim of the study of the literature and history of any people, he held, must be the better understanding of the life and institutions of that people, their origins, evolutions, achievements and contributions to the world's culture.

Certainly this is no mean program for any science. And certainly Biblical scholars will not question the validity of Jastrow's main thesis. The measure, therefore, of Jastrow's work as a Biblical

---

<sup>4</sup> P. x seq.

critic is the determination of the degree to which he adhered to his program and achieved constructive and worthy results.

Jastrow was not primarily a Biblical critic. Rather he was by natural interest and early scientific training a Semitist, particularly in the fields of Hebrew, Arabic and Assyrian languages and literatures. In addition, due largely to the fine influence of his learned father, Jastrow was acquainted with Jewish rabbinic literature, particularly the *Aggada*, with its treasures of ancient tradition. For this reason undoubtedly he knew how to evaluate tradition, and steadily insisted upon its importance as one of the indispensable elements in the constructive study of the Bible.<sup>5</sup> Nor were his interests in Semitic studies predominantly philological, although in this province, too, he showed himself again and again a complete master. The culture and institutions of the Semitic peoples attracted him most, and above all else Semitic religions in all their manifold aspects. But these very facts made it certain that he would in time concern himself with Biblical research, and that, too, upon a broad and varied scale. And these facts also probably explain why in most of his work in the Biblical field he was so decidedly unconventional both in aim and in method.

His earliest study in Arabic and Hebrew philology appeared in 1885; his first Assyriological study in 1887. But his first constructive investigation of a Biblical problem was not published until 1892,<sup>6</sup> and even it was in character more Assyriological than Biblical. Other studies of similar nature followed in rapid succession during the next two years and at brief intervals thereafter. These Biblical-Assyriological studies reached their climax in his *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions* (1914).

Not until 1894 did Jastrow's first specifically Biblical study appear.<sup>7</sup> This, too, was speedily followed by several similar papers, largely philological in character, yet dealing directly with neither the so-called Lower nor Higher Criticism, but rather with important institutions of the religion of Israel.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Note his fine use of a tradition recorded in *Midrash Bereshith Rabba* in his paper, 'Palestine and Assyria in the Days of Joshua,' *ZA* 7 (1892). 1-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> 'The Element "Bosheth" in Hebrew Proper Names,' *JBL* 13 (1894). 19-30.

<sup>8</sup> 'Hebrew Proper Names Compounded with "Yah" and "Yahu,"' *JBL* 13 (1894). 101-127; 'The Origin of the Form "Yah" of the Divine Name,' *ZA* 16 (1896). 1-16; 'The Name Samuel and the Stem "Sha'al,"' *JBL* 19 (1900). 82-105, and others.

However, it must not be imagined that Jastrow had no sympathy with the tasks and methods of Lower and Higher Criticism. He merely regarded them and the conclusions which they established, not as ends in themselves, as so many Biblical scholars have done and still do, but only as means to a far greater end; yet they were for him important and indispensable branches of Biblical Science, in every way worthy of consideration and investigation. As might be expected, therefore, in these two fields also he made significant contributions. In the field of Lower Criticism several of his writings may be cited, such as *Note on a Passage in Lamentations* (2:6),<sup>9</sup> *On Ruth* 2:8,<sup>10</sup> *I Kings* 18:2,<sup>11</sup> and especially *Joshua* 3:16.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of Higher Criticism his research was of a far profounder character, and his contribution far more unique and significant. As he worked deeper and deeper into Biblical investigation he developed a theory of literary evolution that, in a way, modified materially the established hypothesis of a number of original independent documentary sources. Jastrow's variant hypothesis might perhaps be called appropriately the theory of systematic literary accretion. He argued that in general the various books or units of Biblical writing began with a single composition or document of a single, pronounced, obvious purpose and point of view; then, as generations passed and new ideas and doctrines developed, different writers in successive ages recast the original work in various ways, by internal changes of words or phrases, by omissions here and there, and above all else by insertions and additions of varying extent and character, which reflect a later and usually orthodox point of view, and which differ so markedly from the original book or document, that their secondary character is readily apparent.

Jastrow applied this hypothesis to Babylonian literature as well as to the Bible.<sup>13</sup> But he made the most varied and far-reaching application of it to the books and documents of the Old Testament.

<sup>9</sup> *ZAW* 15 (1895). 287.

<sup>10</sup> *JBL* 15 (1896). 59-62.

<sup>11</sup> *JBL* 17 (1898). 108-110.

<sup>12</sup> *JBL* 36 (1917). 53-63.

<sup>13</sup> Note his treatment of the Gilgamesh Epic in *The Religion of Assyria and Babylonia* (1898), 467-517, and 'Adam and Eve in Babylonian Literature', *AJSL* 15 (1899). 193-214; 'On the Composite Character of the Babylonian Creation Story,' in the *Nöldeke Festschrift* (1906) 2. 969-982; and 'Old and Later Elements in the Code of Hammurapi,' *JAOS* 36 (1916). 1-33.

Unquestionably the underlying principle of the hypothesis is sound and uncontrovertible in so far as it affects documents of small compass and manifestly single character and scope. Accordingly in some of his first writings in which he applied this theory to its fullest extent he made invaluable contributions to Biblical Science, notably in *Wine in the Pentateuchal Codes*,<sup>14</sup> *The 'Nazir' Legislation*,<sup>15</sup> and *The So-called Leprosy Laws*.<sup>16</sup>

But Jastrow carried this hypothesis much farther than this, and argued that the literary history of even entire Biblical books, as for instance Joshua<sup>17</sup>, can be reconstructed in quite the same manner. This is the dominant theme of his two late works, *A Gentle Cynic* (1919) and *The Book of Job* (1920). He endeavors to prove that both *Ecclesiastes* and *Job* began each as a document voicing decidedly unorthodox beliefs and questions that were current in certain free-thinking circles in post-exilic Judaism. Then each document was gradually and systematically recast and enlarged by internal emendations and additions of a pronouncedly pietistic character, which so changed, or seemed to change, the doubting, questioning, almost heretical character of the original books that they could be included eventually in the canon of sacred Jewish writings. A treatment of somewhat similar nature promises to underly Jastrow's forthcoming, posthumous work on *The Song of Songs*.

Certainly the hypothesis is original and striking, and its application to *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* bold and unreserved, just as the conclusions based upon it are far-reaching and significant in the extreme. Whether this hypothesis and this analysis and reconstruction of the text of these books will stand the test of repeated investigation and application by other scholars, it is, of course, still too early to tell. But whatever be the outcome of this test, certainly it can not be gainsaid that far more than any Biblical critic before him, Jastrow has demonstrated that glosses and additions to the original text are not insignificant incidents, merely to be determined and then dismissed as of no importance. Rather, he has shown conclusively, additions, emendations and glosses are frequently, if not generally, purposed and significant, that they

<sup>14</sup> *JAOS* 33 (1913). 180-192.

<sup>15</sup> *JBL* 33 (1914). 266-285.

<sup>16</sup> *JQR* (new series), 4 (1914). 357-418.

<sup>17</sup> 'Constructive Elements in the Study of the Old Testament,' *JBL* 36 (1917). 23, note 24.

reflect the changing point of view and theology of later ages, and have a deep historical value.

And just in this insistence upon the historical significance of glosses, emendations and other accretions to the original text, and upon the importance of tradition as a historical source, Jastrow has promoted greatly the method of the scientific study of the Bible just as by his many investigations of the social and religious institutions of ancient Israel he has enriched our knowledge of the life and achievement of the Hebrew people. Surely this is constructive, scientific study of the highest type. And surely, therefore, we must acknowledge that Jastrow realized his ideal of what Biblical study should be, and that his work as a Biblical critic is of eminent and permanent value.

We are his debtors. We mourn his all-too-early loss, and especially when we think of all that he might have achieved, had he been permitted to fill out the traditional allotted span of human life, and in those remaining years develop his hypothesis and methods further, and apply them to other Biblical books and other problems of Biblical Science. Yet just we who labor in the Biblical field, with its uplifting message of hope and trust, have learned the lesson not to grieve too much for what might have been, but to believe with firm faith that what is, is for the best, and to be thankful for the rich blessings we have enjoyed. And so we shall ever cherish in loving, grateful memory the life, the friendship and the work of that 'gentle' scholar, Morris Jastrow, Jr.

## THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MORRIS JASTROW JR. TO THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

BY GEORGE A. BARTON

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

PROFESSOR JASTROW'S many-sided abilities were conspicuously manifested in his contributions to the historical study of religion. In this field no American scholar has done so much as he to stimulate an intelligent interest. His own contributions to the subject were of the greatest value, and, as Secretary for many years of the "American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religions," and as Editor of a series of "Handbooks on the History of Religions", he became the moving spirit of undertakings which have greatly enriched the literature of the subject by the labors of others.